

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-31 AGRE-00 EB-08 COME-00 TRSY-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 /080 W
-----067612 271904Z /43
R 261110Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9271

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 6071

DEPARTMENT PASS AID FOR NE

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, AF, US
SUBJ: MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD
ZIRI

1. ON JULY 24, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AID DIRECTOR AND THE AID
AGRICULTURE OFFICER, I PAID MY INITIAL CALL ON THE MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE, DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZIRI. AT THE OUTSET, I NOTED
THAT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE NEWSOM'S DISCUSSION WITH CHAIRMAN
TARAKI INDICATED THAT BOTH OF OUR COUNTRIES WERE DESIROUS OF HAVING
FRIENDLY AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF
MUTUAL RESPECT AND BENEFIT.

2. I ASKED THE MINISTER HOW HE WAS PROGRESSING WITH THE CURRENT
FIVE YEAR PLAN, WHAT THE MAIN FOCUS WOULD BE, AND WHETHER THERE
WOULD BE AN INCREASED ALLOCATION FOR AGRICULTURE. THE MINISTER SAID
THAT LAND REFORM AND ASSISTING THE LANDLESS SMALL FARMERS WOULD BE TH
E
CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM; HE EXPECTED AGRICULTURE TO
RECEIVE A GREATER PROPORTION OF THE BUDGET. HE SUMMARIZED IN SOME
DETAIL THE PROBLEMS OF LAND REFORM AND THE DIFFICULTY ENTAILED IN
PROVIDING LAND TO THE APPROX 35 PERCENT OF THE RURAL POPULATION WHICH
WAS LANDLESS. HE NOTED THAT SOME 5 PERCENT OF THE FARMERS OWN 45
PERCENT OF THE LAND, WITH 95 PERCENT OF THE FARMERS HAVING ONLY 55
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PERCENT OF THE LAND.

HE SAID THAT SOME FORM OF FARMER COOPERATIVE WAS REQUIRED TO GET
ADEQUATE INPUTS AND TECHNICAL HELP TO THE SMALL FARMERS. HE STRESSED
THAT SUCH FARMER COOPERATIVES WOULD BE VOLUNTARY AND THAT EACH
FARMER WOULD FARM HIS OWN LAND; BUT, THEY WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO FORM
GROUPS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN FARM INPUTS, INCLUDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

,
AND TO MARKET FARM OUTPUTS.

HE NOTED THAT WATER IS THE KEY PRODUCTION GPNQTRAI NT AND IMPROVE-
MENTS IN SMALL SCALE IC:0 589, 2- 3 3,58-). HE ALSO SAID THAT
LAND REFORM, REGARDLESS OF HOW IT WAS CARRIED OUT, WOULD PROBABLY
REDUCE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FOR THE FIRST ONE OR TWO YEARS.

3. THE MINISTER SAID THEY WOULD NEED MUCH HELP, PARTICULARLY FINANCIA
L
HELP WITH PROVIDING CREDIT TO SMALL FARMERS AND ESTABLISHING
NECESSARY RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE. HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. COULD HELP THE
GOVERNMENT WITH THESE UNDERTAKINGS. WE SAID THAT OUR PRIMARY AID OB-
JECTIVE WAS TO HELP IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF THE RUAL POOR AND THAT
WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS WITH HIS MINISTRY SPECIFIC WAYS WE MIGHT
HELP THEM. WE CITED OUR EXISTING AND PLANNED PROJECTS, NOTING THAT
WE WERE READY TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL \$3.2 MILLION FOR THE HELMAND
PROJECT AND THAT WE WERE READY TO MOVE AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE INTEGRATED WHEAT PROJECT AS SOON AS THE GOVERNMENT SIGNED A
CONTRACT WITH THE MIDAMERICA INTERNATION AGRICULTURAL CONSORTIUM
(MIAC). WE ALSO NOTED OUR \$5 MILLION CREDIT TO THE AGRICULTURE
DEVELOPMENT BANK AND OUR PLANNED GRAIN STABILIZATION PROJECT TO BE
UNDERTAKEN IN COOPERATION WITH THE WORLD BANK AND THE UNITED KINGDOM.
WE TOLD THE MINISTER WE HAD JUST RECENTLY BEEN APPROACHED BY THE WORL
D
BANK TO PARTICIPATE IN ITS INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN TH
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GHAZNI AND WARDAK REGION. THE MINISTER SAID HE WELCOMED THIS ASSIST-
ANCE, INCLUDING OUR PROPOSED PARTICIPATION IN THE INTEGRATED RURAL
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

4. THE MINISTER CALLED OUR ATTENTION TO THE RECENT CABINET
DECISION TO PROCEED WITH OUR INTEGRATED WHEAT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT,
BUT SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME QUESTION ON SITE LOCATION AND ASKED
IF THE PROJECT COULD BE LOCATED IN THE HELMAND VALLEY. THE MINISTER
NOTED WHAT IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL AREAS THE HELMAND AND SISTAN HAD BE
EN
IN THE DISTANT PAST -- IT HAD BEEN THE GRANARY OF AFGHANISTAN -- AND
THE GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE TO RESTORE THIS REGION TO ITS FORMER PRO-
DUCTIVITY. HE HOPED AID COULD DO MORE IN THE AREA AND THOUGHT THE
WHEAT PROJECT MIGHT BE A VEHICLE FOR THIS. WE EXPLAINED THE TECHNICAL
REASONS FOR LOCATING THE WHEAT PROJECT IN BAGHLAN,BUT SAID WE WOULD
BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THESE REASONS FURTHER WITH HIS STAFF.

WE ASKED THE MINISTER WHAT NEXT STEPS WE SHOULD TAKE WITH REGARD
TO THE INTEGRATED WHEAT PROJECT AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE CAN
DO TO HELP MOVE IT ALONG. THE MINISTER SAID WE SHOULD TAKE THE MATTER
UP WITH HIS DEPUTY AND WITH THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING.

5. COMMENT: IT WAS A FRIENDLY MEETING AND THE MINISTER SEEMED ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN OUR ASSISTANCE IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. HIS EXPLANATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR LAND REFORM WAS ENCOURAGING IN THAT IT EXPLICITLY EXCLUDED FORCED COLLECTIVIZATION OR PRODUCTION COOPERATIVES. WE SHALL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO GET THE GOVERNMENT TO RESOLVE THE LOCATION OF THE INTEGRATED WHEAT PROJECT, BUT ON SOUND TECHNICAL GROUNDS, CAN SEE NO ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO ITS LOCATION IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGRICULTURE, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL06071
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780308-0896
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780720/aaaaaqev.tel
Line Count: 125
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 01fae66c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1886048
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZIRI
TAGS: EAID, AF, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/01fae66c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014